

April 12, 2001

The Honorable Michael Powell  
Chairman of the FCC  
Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

The Region IV Education Service Center (ESC) has been providing educational programming via its Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS) network to educators and students for 15 years. The ability to continue providing this service is threatened by proceedings currently before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). We believe these proceedings may result in the relocation of our current broadcast channels to less functional and less valuable frequencies.

Since its inception Region IV ESC has used its ITFS network to deliver for-credit courses, enrichment programs for K-12 students, and professional development for teachers and administrators. Through these distance learning opportunities hundreds of thousands of students and educators have had access to programs not available in their own schools. This technology has worked particularly well in the Texas gulf coast area due to its flat terrain. Recent activity within the wireless industry and through FCC action has created hope for this aging technology in the digital era.

Region IV ESC's wireless cable partner, Sprint Broadband Wireless Group (as well as all other ITFS license holders in the Houston metropolitan area), has been readying our network for broadband services including two-way communications (video, voice, and data), cellularized transmission paths (nearly eliminates line-of-sight problems), and high-speed Internet access. The potential for increased access to programming resources by an increased number of campuses is boundless and will create a new wave of demand for these kinds of services.

We believe relocating the channels currently used by Region IV ESC and other ITFS license holders throughout the nation endangers the vital services delivered by this re-emerging technology. The wireless partnerships and revenue generated through excess channel capacity leases will most likely disappear if educational organizations are relocated to inferior and less-valuable frequencies. Without this revenue source, our program and most others will not be able to afford the maintenance and operation costs; and, the students and educators we currently serve will lose these valuable resources. We respectfully request the FCC rule in favor of leaving the ITFS spectrum as it is currently assigned. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Bill McKinney